

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY

In the Matter of:
"FIRE ON BOARD M/V COLUMBIA"
Date of Fire June 6, 2000

Docket No.:
DCA00MM030

Recorded Interview CHRISTIAN BIAGI.

On Board
M/V COLUMBIA
Juneau, Alaska

June 9, 2000

BEFORE:

NTSB INTERVIEWERS

Anthony Murray
Operations Group Chairman

Terry Weaver
Survival Factors Group Chairman

CAPTAIN NORM EDWARDS
Vessel Operations Manager
State of Alaska Marine Highway System

LIEUTENANT JAMES BARTLETT
USCG, MSO, Juneau, Alaska

TERRY WEAVER
NTSB Survival Factors Group Chairman

GEORGE BRERETON, CAPTAIN
M/V COLUMBIA

CHRIS BIAGI, CHIEF MATE
M/V COLUMBIA

DOUG STERN, Alternate CHIEF MATE
M/V COLUMBIA

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2 MR. BIAGI: Last name is B as in boy, i-a-g-
3 i. First name is C-h-r-i-s-t-i-a-n. And, if it's
4 important, 12/7/67 for birth date.

5 You wanted me to go on to my past training/

6 MR. MURRAY: Yes. A little bit about your
7 Maritime background.

8 MR. BIAGI: Okay. 1986, I graduated from
9 high school in Ketchikan, Alaska. Went to college in
10 New York, Long Island, specifically King's Point U.S.
11 Merchant Marine Academy for four years. I had a dual
12 major -- 3rd Assistant Engineer's license and 3rd
13 Mate's license when I graduated.

14 And, actually, there's a lot of stress in the
15 engineering portion, which I never did use more than a
16 couple of weeks since I graduated. So that's pretty --
17 engineering is pretty much forgotten, shall I say, in
18 ten years, since 1990.

19 And since then, actually immediately, I came
20 to work here, July 8, 1990. And I worked as a relief
21 3rd mate, basically, navigating is the main portion.

22 Just recently promoted to Chief Mate. And
23 been on board this vessel three weeks on the run as
24 Chief Mate. Two of them last winter and then the ship
25 laid up all winter. And then one right before the

1 accident happened. A week and a day or so.

2 So, most of my experience has been limited to
3 Alaska Marine Highway System. I've done a little bit
4 on tug boats, not enough to qualify as a lot of
5 experience.

6 Q And you hold a Chief Mate's license is your
7 highest license?

8 A Oh, yes. As far as licenses currently that I
9 hold, I still retain my 3rd Engineer license.
10 Unlimited steam and diesel. I have an Ocean Chief Mate
11 unlimited license, a 1,600 Ton Master's license and an
12 Inland Master unlimited license. And all the Z-cards
13 and a few other endorsements.

14 Q I'm curious. Do you have any pilotage?

15 A Oh, yeah. Yes, I do. Main Ship Channels,
16 Ship Channels and stuff in Alaska, and some out ports.

17 Q Well, good. That's an interesting background
18 that you have.

19 Now, can you go into the details of Tuesday,
20 June 6th, leading up to the incident of that day?

21 A Okay. Would you like to know when you
22 started and what you did for the past so many hours?

23 Q No, just...

24 A Okay. Anyhow, let's see. Roughly, 1115,
25 1130 or so, the Captain and I were in my room. Well,

1 we were just talking, basically, doing some stuff on
2 the computer, showing him how to do some stuff on the
3 computer.

4 And saw the lights dim. We both ran to the
5 bridge immediately. It dimmed several times,
6 basically. So we immediately ran to the bridge to find
7 out what was up.

8 Almost with I'd say probably 40 seconds, a
9 minute -- I'm going to tell you right now that my time
10 frames are pretty inaccurate. My schedule previous to
11 that was very, very long.

12 So, anyhow, the time frames may not be
13 completely accurate. So, roughly, thirty seconds to a
14 minute later, the phone, sound powered phone on the
15 bridge rang. And it was communicated to me that there
16 was a fire in the engine room.

17 I immediately rang the general alarm bell to
18 announce to have the emergency crew. It wasn't a drill
19 and that the emergency crew should muster at the double
20 door at the gear locker.

21 After that, I grabbed three radios and ran
22 for the gear locker, not knowing exactly what was going
23 on, just that there was a fire in the engine room.
24 That was the closes I knew at the time.

25 I would say within about three to four

1 minutes, we had the crew down on scene suited up on air
2 packs. Some of the guys had air packs completely on.
3 The other ones were still putting them on.

4 The scene being just right outside of the
5 control room there. So one of the things that we ended
6 up doing was realizing the engineers have all the
7 knowledge in the engine room, versus sending in one of
8 my ABs who was not familiar. You really need the
9 knowledge of the engine room as to what's going on.

10 We transferred our air packs as quickly as we
11 could and actually took a little while to do that
12 because when you have any type of situation on the
13 ship, finding out the information is often a weak link.

14 As soon as you understand what's going on,
15 you can really make better educated decisions. So we
16 started with one person's taking an SCBA off of one of
17 our guys and passing it over to one of the engineers so
18 they could go in there.

19 And it appeared that the fire was pretty well
20 contained, but still unknown. You know, I didn't know
21 exactly what was happening there.

22 We looked immediately -- I say immediately.
23 Just as I thought of things and came up with different
24 plans, then I also asked for input from any of my crew
25 members, that they were welcome to provide input, so

1 that we as a whole could do the best job we could,
2 because I don't know all the answers to every question.

3 We grabbed several fire extinguishers, CO2
4 and whatever else we saw. You see a fire extinguisher
5 close, we brought it to the scene.

6 We streamed down hoses, did not charge them.

7 To my knowledge, at that time, we did not have the
8 capability to charge them. Several hoses in the area.

9 And then we added lots of extra lengths.

10 I think we ended up with 100 or 150 feet. So
11 just in case, not knowing exactly what the situation
12 was, we might be able to extend further.

13 So there were, I believe, three hoses
14 streamed. Let's see. Let's see. During this whole
15 time, I also asked a lot of people to do different
16 things for me -- get this, get that.

17 This isn't quite in order here, but it ran
18 into the problem that the three radios that I had
19 grabbed were not on the same frequency, or not capable
20 of using the same frequency, fighting the fire on
21 board, or the Columbia -- which is different than other
22 vessels, I believe.

23 We fight fires and deal with that on channel
24 17. And on the State frequency, we take care of the
25 rest -- the emergency boat crew, abandon ship and stuff

1 like that.

2 I had to say it worked really well. It's the
3 first time I have actually utilized that, and I was
4 surprised just how well it did work.

5 So I had the three radios that I had brought.

6 I brought them up to the boat deck that I used. I
7 requested a few other items from my room. I had
8 different people grab things from my room.

9 I had a fire plan down there. The
10 ventilation was immediately secured. Because of the
11 fact there was no power, we looked into all other
12 possible sources of ventilation for the control room
13 area, engine room area.

14 Water-tight doors were secured. We left one
15 water-tight door open, which is water-tight door no. 3,
16 because that splits the engine control room area and
17 the auxiliary generator room area. And generators are
18 a pretty critical part of the ship.

19 You can't -- it's best that we could go back
20 and forth. Also we had a fixed CO2 -- well, it's not a
21 fixed CO2. It's called a semi-portable, I believe, a
22 100-pound CO2 with a very long hose right next to it,
23 which was obviously one of the best tools we had.

24 Pretty quickly, we saw the Taku, supplies
25 with extra bottles and extra SCBAs, which came in

1 handy. I think that I will have a request for more
2 bottles. The captain is always -- well, I can't speak
3 for Captain Brereton, but Captain Taylor is always
4 hoping to have a cascading air system on here just in
5 case so we could supply more and more bottles in a
6 situation where we're starting to run out.

7 The Coast Guard also showed up. Four of
8 their members boarded and they were fully suited up and
9 ready to help us out. I showed them the fire plan,
10 gave them a quick run-down of what was on the fire
11 plan, basically.

12 I showed them the surrounding area and what
13 to look for so they didn't have to take it from scratch
14 there.

15 Let's see. A lot of stuff happened really
16 quick. When I first went down there I was pretty
17 tired. I woke up pretty quick. But, as I say, a lot
18 of stuff happened.

19 So I'll be thinking of more and more. I
20 wrote a few notes down here. Didn't get that far on my
21 notes, but I'll see if I can refer to them.

22 Okay, so we had the water-tight doors. We
23 were in contact with the bridge as far as securing any
24 other ventilation. The stack ventilation, basically.

25 Basically, I requested a crew list on the

1 scene so I could, myself, have a list of all the
2 engineers because one of the options in a situation
3 like this if it gets out of control is to release the
4 fixed CO2 system, which will put the fire out. But
5 anybody who's in there, might not make it out.

6 So one of my concerns was keeping track of
7 who was in the engine room and who was not. We asked
8 for a sweep. I believe it was a duplicate sweep, but
9 we asked for a re-sweep.

10 And I had several of my sailors re-sweep all
11 crews' quarters to make sure that nobody was in those
12 areas. And they were in fact, not in the stewards
13 quarters and the forward crew quarters.

14 Let's see. Okay. I also, at that time, I
15 also requested to have a sweep basically of all the
16 gear lockers on the ship. There's three E-gear lockers
17 on the ship, and get every bottle down there.

18 We went through the double-door E-locker
19 because that contains the most gear of any of the
20 lockers on the ship. The engineers had already
21 utilized their E-gear lockes directly right on the
22 scene.

23 So we got all the bottles, swept the ship for
24 the bottles, and basically tried to get as many more
25 radios as I could in use.

1 I believe in a lot of communication during
2 emergencies. And some people believe a lot differently
3 than that. But I know that if I can ask for something,
4 send someone and get reports, delegate people to get,
5 you know, like I say, to use the purser or, in this
6 case, we were using the bridge a lot for communications
7 center.

8 And I can just get what I need to me because
9 there's a lot of improvisation in an emergency as far
10 as responding to whatever it might be. You don't know
11 and you may not know exactly what you're going to need.

12 An example would be the ramps across the
13 ship. You know, that developed and we needed to find
14 something right now to transport passengers. And we
15 found something but it took a few minutes to come up
16 with the idea.

17 Anyhow, I got all the radios I could. Let's
18 see.

19 And as far as the fire went, like I say, the
20 engineers did the fighting of the fire. Most of my
21 guys that were suited up probably didn't need to be
22 suited up.

23 This answers my question as to whether my
24 fire crew should suit up on scene. I've always
25 believed that as long as they're suited up as soon as

1 possible, that that's good. And, usually, it is.

2 But, now I know that a situation such as an
3 engine room fire requires engineers with the knowledge
4 of down there. And so we actually wasted a little time
5 with that.

6 In the future, we'll have my crew members
7 carry their suits to the scene and then suit up.
8 That's one of the main things that I learned, and there
9 was a lot.

10 Okay. And as far as the fire goes, like I
11 said, the engineers, they fought the fire mostly. They
12 didn't really fight it. It was mostly assessing what
13 damage had been done, assessing that the power had been
14 secured, if it really had been secured.

15 Initially, I believe I was told that they
16 were almost positive that power was secured. It turns
17 out that we had something pretty hot in there still
18 afterwards, so apparently maybe not everything was
19 secured.

20 Let's see. So, basically, supplied the
21 engineers with the abilities and we tried to come up
22 with as many plans, just in case the fire got further
23 out of control.

24 One was, like I say, the complete securing of
25 ventilation. As you heard in previous testimony, the

1 escape hatch on the port island there was open
2 temporarily, I believe, to try and vent that under the
3 engineer's orders, try and vent that out so they could
4 see what was going on a little bit.

5 That possibly caused a re-flash and was
6 immediately shut. So at that point, maybe about 20-30
7 minutes into it, it became apparent that we were going
8 to just be taking the passengers off the ship, and that
9 the Taku was going to come alongside of us, or try to
10 come alongside of us. Because we weren't sure if would
11 work.

12 We weren't positive that it would work until
13 it happened. And the bridge wings extended out and it
14 works pretty well in good weather.

15 At that point, I did, once the fire appeared
16 to be under control, contained, I did switch over to
17 assisting with that operation. And developing a plan
18 for getting the passengers off.

19 And I went back and forth. At that point, I
20 had Mark Kiesel -- he is a purser who had all along --
21 he pretty much demonstrated himself to be extremely
22 competent in getting anything that I asked, done. He
23 probably resupplied 90 percent on the air packs.

24 He kept the engineers in air packs. They'd
25 come up, take a breather and put another one on and go.

1 down and see what was going on.

2 As far as I heard a little bit of CO2 being
3 shot down a few extinguishers. It appears that about 8
4 of them were used. But I didn't actually do any of the
5 fire-fighting myself.

6 So, the Taku was brought alongside and we
7 threw a few lines between the ships and tied them up.
8 We located some basically kind of a like a ladder with
9 a piece of plywood on top of it, and strung those
10 across in safety lines.

11 Meanwhile, the whole time while we were
12 fighting the fire, or dealing with the fire situation,
13 the stewards department are on different frequencies,
14 had been mustering all the passengers.

15 As far as I can tell, I wasn't involved in
16 that, they did a pretty darned good job. They had
17 everybody lined up ready to go. We built -- assembled
18 the plank between the two ships. It was about a four
19 foot, maybe three foot gap between the ships.

20 We took two 80s about two foot wide,
21 approximately 2 foot wide, 8 foot long platform ladder
22 assemblies there. And then we set them down between
23 the two ships. We placed thick, thick -- I think it
24 might have been three quarter-inch plywood over that,
25 on top of that.

1 We secured one end of the ramp to our ship so
2 that if for some reasons, the ships were to separate,
3 we wouldn't lose our ramp in the water.

4 We strung-up a couple of safety lines people
5 could use for something to hold on to.

6 Also, the Taku's rescue boat with Chief Mate
7 over there, Tom Moore, stood alongside basically right
8 below. It's about 4 or 5 feet to the water. Probably,
9 about 5 feet to the water from the car deck level.

10 They stood by below and probably could have
11 taken anything -- if for some reason somebody were to
12 fall in the water, they were there, to stand by and get
13 them out of the water.

14 It's my belief that we probably could have
15 evacuated 95 percent of the people without even putting
16 the ramp down because we were right there, just walk
17 over from sponson to sponson.

18 In today's society, we're safety-oriented and
19 we did everything we could to do the safe way.

20 So, at that point, we took as many of the
21 people were elderly, and we had a few medical
22 situations.

23 Well, we had a lot of situations, you know,
24 when you're doing this, a lot of stuff is happening at
25 once and you're just trying to solve as many problems

1 as you can, usually through delegating people, the
2 people that you think can do the job to do it.

3 We started to take down some of the elderly
4 people. We also at a point had to stop and put people
5 up to stop any other method of accessing the car deck.

6 There's several ways to get to the car deck.

7 Passengers were probably aware of three of
8 them. And at some point, a few passengers got down
9 there, got past somehow. I don't know exactly how that
10 happened. But we rounded up those passengers and put
11 someone back on there.

12 Our idea was to bring them all down through
13 the forward ladder, port side, which we started to do.

14 And we brought all the older. There was a guy on
15 medication that was having -- well, there were several
16 people that looked like they were in pretty rough
17 shape. I just can't describe it any other way. Some
18 really old people that were -- didn't look like they
19 were very healthy.

20 They needed to be got off first. So we
21 started to bring them down. That actually took quite a
22 while for us to do that because of bringing the people
23 that were slower first.

24 If I could do it again, I would separate the
25 channels and hold all the people aside that would slow

1 things down, and I'd bring them down an alternative
2 way.

3 However, what we did worked and we understood
4 what our time frame was. We were not under immediate
5 rush. We had time to get dogs, and everybody had a
6 little problem. We had medication. There was
7 medication and a bunch of different passengers wanted
8 their medications.

9 So what we did there was we assigned stewards
10 -- grab bodies. You're now assigned to making sure
11 that nobody gets past here, and you two people, I want
12 you to escort people to and from their vehicles. And
13 don't let anybody else get past here until, you know,
14 the last two people got back.

15 So we did the best we could to escort people.

16 And almost everybody was escorted to their vehicle
17 that wanted to go, and got their pets as quickly as
18 possible. Pets were a popular thing, and medication.
19 Wallets, credit cards, that was all like a luxury in
20 abandoning the ship.

21 So we did that. Once things got past the
22 people that were having a little trouble making it down
23 the ladder, we were able to really get things moving
24 and evacuate the ship pretty quickly.

25 So there's a lot more to add to it, and I'm

1 glad you gave me your card. Once we had that done and
2 got all the passengers off, what we did for a count,
3 what I find is like an almost unsolvable puzzle is
4 getting an accurate muster of a ship with four or five
5 hundred passengers. Maybe a cruise ship would be
6 worse. How do you get an accurate muster?

7 Every single person that was on that vessel
8 by name during the real emergency, how do you do that?

9 What we did was we had an Alaska State
10 Trooper I believe, let's see, Robert Carey and Robert -
11 - I don't remember his last name. He was traveling on
12 board. We have a policy rule about State Troopers to
13 travel on board. As long as they're willing to walk
14 around in uniform, they handle situations that come up.
15 And they do come up once in a while.

16 Or, sometimes, more than once in a while.

17 Anyhow, Robert was very helpful. What he did
18 was he kept the count. And all we did for that count
19 was we right on the platform, somebody's going to walk
20 over there, he's putting a mark down. One more
21 person's gone.

22 A couple of people had to come back. At the
23 very end, there was a little confusion as to what the
24 count was. But, we did the best we could there. So,
25 the count was established.

1 There was one man whose -- and this was
2 pretty alarming -- who could not find his daughter. He
3 was also pretty elderly and barely made it down the
4 stairs, in pretty rough shape.

5 From what I've heard, his daughter kioskied --
6 his daughter wasn't on board. So that was one of my
7 biggest worries, a situation like that. The ship was
8 swept, checked, couldn't find her.

9 Once we determined that all the passengers
10 were off the ship, the tugboat, I believe we had to
11 wait a little while before the tug boat. The Taku came
12 along.

13 We took two mooring lines there and tied it
14 to the Taku up to their after, after tie-up. I don't
15 know exactly what it's called there. Their after deck,
16 the weather deck there.

17 And they towed us for a short while, away
18 from the beach, there was no wind. The weather was
19 pretty good. Just like you see today, mild. It was
20 the light rain, warm weather. We were fortunate in
21 that.

22 And they towed us away from the beach enough
23 so that we had no worries at all of drifting to the
24 beach. And in time for the tug boat to get there and
25 pull us away.

1 The tug boat came along. At that time, we
2 were hooked up and towed away. That's part of what
3 happened. It's everything that I remember at the
4 moment.

5 I have to once again tell you that I'd been
6 up for a long time and just dealt with as many problems
7 as I could solve and thought of as many possible
8 situations that could arise and how we would prevent
9 them if they happened.

10 Because the fire really was basically
11 contained the whole time. So it was a matter of what
12 if, what if this happens.

13 And that's pretty much that. Do you have any
14 questions?

15 Q Well, that's a pretty good narrative. Thanks
16 very much. I just have one question about what
17 condition would the anchors be as far as ready to let
18 go. What would be their status?

19 A A situation where you were worried about hitting
20 the beach and drifting on the beach, you would
21 definitely have your anchorage ready to let go.

22 The water there is pretty deep on the beach.
23 I believe our rate of drift was such that -- I don't
24 know whether the anchorage would have done enough
25 probably, if it happened, done on a different

1 frequency. I was unaware of that situation.

2 Q Well, were the anchors secured for sea or
3 were they considered to be available, to be made
4 available in case you needed them?

5 CAPTAIN BRERETON: Can I talk?

6 Q Sure.

7 CAPTAIN BRERETON: Perhaps Chris could
8 describe the normal way our anchors are secured. And
9 how difficult they are to let go.

10 MR. BIAGI: Yes. It's a pretty quick
11 operation to do. Like I say, as I was immediately on
12 the fire situation, I don't know what was happening too
13 much with the other aspects. That was not my area of
14 concentration.

15 But, we always, to clear the anchors, all you
16 have to do is you lift up the paw, take devil's claw.
17 The paws, riding paw, is just a basic mechanical piece
18 that will ride. You can pull anchor chain in but you
19 can't ride it out while that's there. It just blocks
20 it.

21 You can flip that just as easy as doing that
22 (indicating). That's all it is. And then we have
23 what's called a devil's claw. And that's a more
24 permanent thing. And you can loosen that up.

25 I don't know exactly, I would say in ten to

1 thirty seconds, you could take that off and then
2 release the brake.

3 CAPTAIN BRERETON: So, if you wanted to run
4 up there and drop the anchor, how long would it take to
5 have that anchor to fall out of that place? If you
6 were in a hurry, how long?

7 MR. BIAGI: If you were in a hurry, an
8 emergency, it would take almost no time at all. But,
9 you can have it down within thirty seconds if you knew
10 what you were doing.

11 MR. MURRAY: So, in other words, they weren't
12 secured for sea as in the spill pipes weren't cemented
13 over, or there were no covers on the spill pipes?

14 MR. BIAGI: No, there weren't.

15 CAPTAIN BRERETON: They're cleared several
16 times a day coming out of ports. We don't do that
17 unless we make an ocean voyage to port...

18 MR. MURRAY: All right. That's what I was
19 getting at. Okay.

20 All right, thank you. I don't have any
21 further questions here, Chris.

22 MR. BIAGI: I'm sure someone else does.

23 THE INTERVIEWER, MS. WEAVER: I just have a
24 few follow-up questions. This is Terry Weaver.

25 BY MS. TERRY WEAVER:

1 Q Have you ever been involved in an emergency
2 before where you led the fire-fighting team?

3 A Where I led the fire-fighting team? I don't
4 believe so. I've been in emergencies before but not
5 while I was Chief Mate leading the fire team.

6 Q Have you ever been involved in an emergency
7 where you were a fire-fighter?

8 A I've been in -- no, not an emergency, no.

9 Q You've had fire-fighting training?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Basic and Advanced?

12 A Yes, at school in Bayonne, New Jersey.

13 Q Would you describe the makeup of the fire
14 teams? You were saying fire teams were assembled.
15 But, how many make up a fire team?

16 A I just happened to bring my muster list which
17 describes people's duties. I believe on here 2nd mate
18 muster E-squad. This is the emergency squad for a
19 chief mate, myself, emergency squad in charge... of
20 operation VHF channel 17; 2nd mate also would be a part
21 of that. He musters the E-squad and assists me.

22 We'll go down to the watchman, whose job it
23 is to close the water-tight door. No. 2, then report
24 to the Chief at time which the water tight doors were
25 closed and go to the card deck E-gear locker.

1 Then we have the other watchman who closes
2 some more water tight doors and reports to me.

3 Chief Purser. That ended up being, let's
4 see, that ended up being Mark Kiesel, the purser who
5 ended up assisting me. He's not part of the E-squad.
6 The senior person, Mark Kiesel, he's on the E-squad,
7 providing medical kit and oxygen bottle.

8 I forgot to mention that earlier too. After
9 all FSC we ended up giving all our gear -- not all but
10 a lot of our gear to the Taku for a medical emergency
11 that they had that was unrelated.

12 Yes, let's see. The 3rd engineer would
13 provide the tool bag, assist as directed. The 3rd
14 engineer was pretty busy, Stan Jones. He was kind of a
15 hero down there. All the engineers did a pretty good
16 job. He's on the E-squad.

17 So that's the basic composition of your E-
18 squad there. Did I miss someone?

19 CAPTAIN BRERTON: You jumped from the mates
20 down to the watchman. We have sailors there, don't we?

21 MR. BIAGI: Oh, yes, we've got the entire
22 fire squad team yes, that's true.

23 Basically, the rest of these guys -- what
24 we've got on here is we've built some back packs, kind
25 of back packs, they're carry packs, with some of the

1 critical fire-fighting gear that we have so that a crew
2 can grab this pack and go.

3 We've got a length of hose. I think we've
4 got a "Y" on there. We've got a low velocity fog
5 applicator. And the critical things so that we can go
6 right out. I think it's a two and a half to a split Y
7 to go to one and a half inch. So that we can have a
8 hose set up immediately if there's a fire.

9 We did not utilize those. We just streamed
10 the hoses that were right next to the station. But
11 they grabbed that and a bunch of other gear. I should
12 list also the bosun, the rest of the sailors, the AB.

13 Basically, the deck crew is the E-squad, my
14 sailors. I've got five ABs, three OSs, a couple of
15 watchmen which I mentioned earlier. Basically, the
16 deck crew.

17 MS. WEAVER: Did all of them respond to this
18 fire?

19 MR. BIAGI: They were there. And I didn't
20 personally count every one of them. The E-squad was
21 there and on scene within approximately three or four
22 minutes, dressed up in their fire suits ready to go.

23 And as I said, they didn't end up being used.

24 MS. WEAVER: Did they receive any particular
25 announcement or a special signal for them to know that

1 the fire team was needed to respond?

2 MR. BIAGI: Well, when I rang the 10-second
3 general alarm, everybody responds and, for sure, the E-
4 squads.

5 But, you know, we of course drill every week
6 on that. The situations that I've been on, on the
7 Columbia I was in one other situation once, a garbage
8 can, a smoking cigarette and some smoke.

9 And we had the guys out there in two minutes
10 at that time also. They were just there right on top
11 of it, dressed up, ready to put out the garbage can and
12 smoke.

13 It wasn't much of a fire but, you know, they
14 were all there real quick. And that's pretty much the
15 general plan. If I can have my guys there immediately
16 suited up ready to fight a fire, then I'm...

17 MS. WEAVER: The engineers that were down in
18 the engine room, were they aware they're not part of
19 the fire team?

20 MR. BIAGI: Oh, of course. Realistically,
21 when you have any emergency on here, you deal with it.
22 You can have all the plans you want on paper, but you
23 deal with what happens every time.

24 MS. WEAVER: They drill with the fire teams?

25 MR. BIAGI: The engineers, like I said, we

1 got the third engineer is part of the E-squad, the
2 third engineer is the only one that I see on the E-
3 squad right there.

4 I think that might have been Stan, the day
5 3rd engineer, number 23. When they drilled, just that
6 one person would drill.

7 MS. WEAVER: Just that one person?

8 MR. BIAGI: Well, as the E-squad. There's
9 drills every week and pretty much everyone on the ship
10 participates in the drill.

11 But, the E-squad concentrates on a mock fire,
12 mock emergencies. And they'll sometimes be separated.

13 And often will bring other crew members in and include
14 them in what's being talked about, what scenarios are
15 happening.

16 MS. WEAVER: So there were three engineers in
17 the engine room doing the fire-fighting?

18 MR. BIAGI: Basically, the first engineer,
19 Glenn Scott. I don't want to say fire. I was not down
20 there. I never actually saw a fire. You know, I mean
21 there was smoke on the upper portions of the car deck.

22 But I was not down in a spot there where there was a
23 fire.

24 There was this fire in...

25 (Begin Tape 2:)

1 MS. TERRY WEAVER: The interview continues
2 with the Chief Mate.

3 Before I ask that other question, I wanted to
4 clarify. There were three engineers in there down in
5 the engine room doing the fire-fighting.

6 MR. BIAGI: Off and on. Right. The chief
7 engineer I mentioned, Glenn Scott, the chief engineer
8 went down clearing air. Actually, the chief didn't
9 always have an air pack on.

10 We had Stan Jones. I believe he's the 3rd
11 engineer. And Glenn Scott did the majority of actually
12 dealing with the fire.

13 Dan Wilson, I don't recall him doing a lot of
14 that.

15 What's Dan's last name? Will somebody remind
16 me of that? The 3rd engineer? Dan Rhodes, it sounds
17 like it may be, Dan Rhodes.

18 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

19 Q And out of those engineers that you named,
20 you said that there was one engineer that usually
21 drilled with the fire team?

22 A As I said before, I'm pretty new to this ship
23 and its permanent crew. I'm between my first and only
24 two weeks on here as chief mate. And it was roughly
25 October, late September last year, on the run.

1 And this summer, things changed. I'm not
2 sure if he's the permanent guy or what. But I believe
3 if he's the day 3rd, he'd be the guy who normally does.

4 We have one person who drills with us. And I
5 think that might be Stan, but I'm not sure.

6 Q So did you ever go down to the fire area?

7 A Yeah. I went down as the smoke cleared and I
8 determined that it was okay to go down there. I went
9 down. I brought the Coast Guard guys with me. This is
10 one of the many things I forgot.

11 I brought two Coast Guard guys with me. I
12 grabbed them. I said, in addition to what they had
13 there, I said I wanted them to grab -- help me. After
14 I showed them the fire plan: "Here, fire extinguisher
15 here, here, here, here, here. So we go down here,
16 let's just grab a bunch of fire extinguishers and
17 center them around the area and center some of them up
18 above the entrance, too.

19 And so we just had more. And you just can't
20 have enough because when you go down to the scene,
21 you'll see a portion of the fire extinguishers. They
22 were set there ready to use.

23 So I grabbed those guys and had them do that.

24 When I was dealing with the passenger
25 evacuation, the Coast Guard was down with the

1 engineers, the Coast Guard fire fighters, and working
2 with them.

3 I'm not clear on all the details that
4 happened then because I wasn't there.

5 Q And would you describe what occurred at the
6 staging area and how you managed the fire from there?

7 Like you said, you had this...

8 A The ISM form. I asked for it and
9 realistically didn't have time to deal with that. The
10 bridge used ISM checklist. To my knowledge, they used
11 the ISM checklist and had those out and evaluated the
12 scene there.

13 But I got them. It was a good idea, but I
14 didn't actually use them. Pretty much just solving
15 every problem I could find. It didn't involve sitting
16 down and reading each form to see what I could do,
17 although that was my idea was maybe there was something
18 I could have possibly forgotten.

19 This is a good indicator of a lot of stuffs
20 happening, of things that could have been taken care of
21 that might have possibly been forgotten.

22 Q How was the bridge able to evaluate the
23 scene?

24 A The bridge was limited pretty much to what I
25 would tell them, that they were passed what

1 information. Lack of information on the actual fire
2 was really the problem. You know, the problem of that
3 being I could corner an engineer.

4 They were very, very busy. Very busy. It
5 was a pretty critical thing that happened here. And
6 when I could corner someone and get information from
7 the 1st, Stan, I would get as much information as I
8 could and I would pass that to the bridge as the news
9 developed, as we discovered more and more what exactly
10 the situation was inside.

11 Q Was anybody documenting what was going on
12 down there to evaluate the scene?

13 A The bridge kept notes.

14 Q Kept Notes?

15 A For the log book, actually, at all times.

16 CAPTAIN BRERETON: Actually, the 3rd mate was
17 taking the most notes and she was down below some place
18 most of the time.

19 MR. BIAGI: Okay. It was done.

20 MS. TERRY WEAVER: Did we ask for a copy of
21 that, or could we get a copy of it?

22 CAPTAIN BRERETON: She's next on our
23 interview list. She's right there, and she has her
24 notes.

25 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

1 Q You mentioned the emergency escape hatch.
2 Would you explain again why that was open?

3 A I believe that the Chief, and I think I
4 overheard him in his interview, and this is also what I
5 believed at the time, was that he requested to open
6 that I believe to ventilate and to try and understand
7 what is happening inside there, because they couldn't
8 see anything, he said, up to one foot.

9 It was probably open for, oh, I bet two or
10 three minutes. Two minutes, something like that.

11 I'd say, after it appeared there might be a
12 reflash, that idea changed real quick. It was shut and
13 secured. As far as I understand, the cause of all
14 reflashes was opening it to see what happened, what was
15 going on.

16 Q Are you aware of any problems with the fire
17 screen doors?

18 A The only problem that I was aware of the fire
19 screen doors was one door which everything was fine.
20 And, during the week, we had one door -- I don't recall
21 which one it was -- had trouble closing because I guess
22 the screw that holds the threshold below the door was a
23 little bit loose.

24 And Doug Sanburg, who was on the crew last
25 week, operated that, I believe. And that was back in

1 business.

2 But I had just tested that door. When we go
3 out to an annual -- go out to sea, we have an annual
4 inspection every year. And we go through everything,
5 make sure every little thing works. And the doors were
6 fine previous to that.

7 Q Okay, I just have a couple more questions on
8 the other side. I didn't get a full understanding of
9 your role as a Chief Mate, your general duties, outside
10 of an emergency.

11 A Outside of an emergency? Well, I'm basically
12 the captain's right-hand man. If he needs something
13 done, then he'll ask me and I'll do it.

14 The chief mate is probably the most difficult
15 job in the fleet, some people say, and I have to agree
16 that it's extremely challenging. It involves almost
17 every aspect you can name on a ship involving a deck
18 crew, particularly the safety, the safety of cargo.

19 Basically, executing any aspect of the
20 master's job in assuring that it gets done for him.
21 That covers training of the crew. It covers quite a
22 variety of things. I mean I could list them for quite
23 a while.

24 It's pretty much anything and everything.
25 Doug, the other chief mate, his review of how to be a

1 chief mate was:

2 Know everything. Do everything. Be
3 everything. And that was all I got.

4 (Laughter.)

5 Q I know you're responsible for a lot of
6 different things. I just want to ask a specific
7 question about maintenance safety equipment -- life
8 saving equipment, fire-fighting equipment. I want to
9 know your role as far as maintaining that equipment.

10 A Specifically? Well, we have a check-off list
11 which you might want to get a copy of we keep on the
12 bridge of all the different things that we need to
13 check off on a weekly basis.

14 That includes going through all the fire
15 extinguishers, every fire station. And as I said,
16 everything -- we just got out of an annual inspection.

17 And this guy here can tell you that that
18 involves a lot of double-checking. We take every
19 battery and every flashlight and we change it out. We
20 put the date that it was on.

21 We ensure that every piece of our safety
22 equipment is working, on a weekly basis. We also have
23 them check out our life boats, are checked out, and
24 inventoried. All our fire fighting gear. Our E-gear
25 lockers are checked out and inventoried.

1 You know, the point of having serial numbers
2 of every air bottle on board and its expiration date.
3 I think the easiest way to really fully answer that
4 question is to provide you with our check-off, safety
5 check-off sheets, which are done on a weekly basis.

6 And we're done prior to the ship having its
7 annual because we're not going to walk into an annual
8 inspection without having double-checked that
9 everything he's going to look at is correct.

10 That means that he's going to look at all
11 thousand of our life preservers and make sure that
12 they're all good; check everything from -- it's a lot
13 of work. It's a couple of weeks of our time preparing
14 for that.

15 Q What about training that's provided to crew
16 members. Could you elaborate on the type of training
17 are you responsible for providing, for crew members?

18 A For the past years, that particular job has
19 gotten a lot more difficult. We have just a ton of
20 things that we need to train these guys on.

21 And it gets done on a week by week basis.

22 CAPTAIN BRERETON: I'm reminding him that we
23 have a training schedule that we can provide.

24 MR. BIAGI: Yes, thank you. And I don't mind
25 being reminded. Thank you. Because I am...

1 CAPTAIN BRERETON: Being as he's not on the
2 hot seat, I figured it was okay to show him that.

3 MR. BIAGI: Yeah. If you look at our records
4 there, we have a monthly set of drills that we do and
5 it rotates. It might be the week before we come out --
6 the week previous IT was emergency towing. We always
7 dropped a rescue boat.

8 We did loss of power. We covered a lot of
9 that stuff on this emergency. I think we had several
10 of our ISM drills happen all at once.

11 Anyhow, we run through a prescribed calendar,
12 which we can also give you, of ISM drills. And we will
13 get the crew together like the week before -- for an
14 example, Doug before, he had two weeks in the yard. He
15 drilled the crew every single day for the Coast Guard
16 inspection.

17 And that was every single for five days, was
18 it, Doug? Four days?

19 MR. STERN: I think four days.

20 MR. BIAGI: Four days of hard drilling.

21 The steward's department so that these guys
22 would be ready to look good when the Coast Guard showed
23 up. And ready for something like this if it ever
24 happened.

25 In my week, I took my guys out there. We had

1 training on the galley fire-fighting equipment. All
2 the stewards were brought through the galley, fire-
3 fighting equipment by Raul Cornelus, permanent 2nd mate
4 and very competent -- been here a long time. He's been
5 here longer than I have. He brought the whole galley
6 crew to that. And then he went down, he took them down
7 to the marine evacuation chutes and explained all that
8 to them.

9 We have a lot of new gear on here. We have
10 what's called a Means of Rescue platform. And we have
11 our fast rescue boat -- well, they're not fast rescue.
12 We'll call them rescue boats. They don't classify as
13 fast rescue boats.

14 I took the entire crew besides the stewards
15 that were working with this; every single one of them
16 crawled in the boat. I had them get in the boat, look
17 at everything, open up the door, look at the battery
18 switch.

19 Discussed all the different aspects of using
20 the rescue boat. Every single one of them, to my
21 knowledge. Maybe, one of them slipped by me. All of
22 them were given a chance.

23 And I believe every one of them went over and
24 operated the gear of lowering it. It was explained in
25 detail. I have to say as one of my things I don't like

1 is when you can't hear what somebody is saying.

2 So I screamed at the top of my lungs and
3 explained how things worked. And then brought the
4 separate group over in case they didn't hear -- until
5 they didn't want to hear it any more.

6 So that's part of the training that I did the
7 last week. We can show you the list of the different
8 drills that we do. But, it covers roughly sixteen
9 different potential emergency situations that would
10 arise, and every week we drill on, on Friday.

11 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

12 Q One thing, we know that the PA was inoperable
13 after a certain point. And you go up and speak to
14 everyone.

15 Did that have any effect on the evacuation
16 that you could see? That people couldn't use the
17 public address system?

18 A In practical terms of, I think that we lost
19 some of the ability to calm the passengers and let them
20 understand what was going on.

21 I think that that was probably the main
22 practical, real problem that happened, because of
23 troubles with the PA system.

24 They were not completely, you know, I've
25 watched on TV and heard one of the complaints is the

1 crew didn't let us know what was going on. They kept
2 us up in the air.

3 And I think that -- I know for a fact that
4 was part of the problem, with the PA system. I would
5 be lying to say that having an operational PA system
6 wasn't a very critical aspect of anything on the ship.

7 I mean, if I'm in the yard and I cannot
8 communicate with my sailor, then I need to get
9 something done, then I'm walking a long walk when
10 you're searching for somebody on any of these vessels,
11 particularly this one.

12 But, as far as the actual effect of what
13 happened on the emergency, almost no effect at all. My
14 guys were suited up, at the fire immediately, and
15 communication was done via radio.

16 Talk backs were used quite a bit. Those
17 functioned good.

18 Q Did your muster station leaders have any way
19 of communicating with passengers? You know, have large
20 groups of people, to talk to them besides yelling out
21 with a bull horn when things were available to them?

22 A Like I said, I was not part of that in
23 general. There is a bull horn on the bridge, to my
24 knowledge. And I'm not sure if that was used or not.
25 I wasn't involved in that part.

1 There was also a -- I don't know if it's a
2 bull horn but it's a portable microphone type of thing
3 that's under my bunk in my room.

4 I'm not much to get up in normal situations
5 and talk in front of passengers. I really hate to
6 publicly speak. It's not my forte at all.

7 So I haven't used that too much. But that
8 could have been used to assist in that situation.

9 Q Is that a part of the training of the crew
10 members in managing an evacuation of using a bull horn
11 or do you always yell out, yell to passengers?

12 A We do not carry bull horns and give them out
13 in drills to use, no. But they are trained to manage
14 an evacuation. That's part of the weekly drill.

15 We don't have that as part of -- we don't
16 pull out bull horns and say, "Here you go." And, you
17 know, that's a good idea.

18 I've got a few things that I'll be changing
19 after this. It's been a learning experience for me.

20 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: I'll make
21 that my last question, that you just commented on.

22 Have you ever had crowd management training?

23 MR. BIAGI: No.

24 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

25 Q Are you scheduled to take it? Has anyone

1 talked to you about taking crowd management training?

2 A No. Crowd management training is part of the
3 next STCW requirements. I will have that by February
4 1, 2002.

5 Q Okay. Just for the record.

6 MR. NORM EDWARDS: We're in the process of
7 developing a course.

8 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

9 Q You mentioned the VHF radios. And you
10 mentioned you had different frequencies? Would you
11 elaborate on that?

12 A As I mentioned before, my experience, this is
13 one of the first vessels -- do you have a copy of the
14 fire station bill? It's now called the Muster List.

15 Q Yes, we have a Muster List.

16 A As I mentioned before, it's been my
17 experience on other vessels that we use one frequency.
18 And I kind of -- I wasn't sure what I thought about
19 the idea of splitting the frequencies up.

20 Captain, how long has this been a policy,
21 split the frequencies up? A year or two?

22 CAPTAIN BRERETON: It was fifteen days old.

23 MR. BIAGI: Fifteen days old.

24 CAPTAIN BRERETON: When the emergency
25 happened.

1 MR. BIAGI: Okay, so --

2 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

3 Q Explain what you mean, split the frequencies
4 up? What was --

5 A There's a lot of stuff happening on the radio
6 during an emergency. And you get more than one
7 scenario. One was evacuating the passengers. One was
8 fighting the fire.

9 Like I say, this was new to me. I think I
10 even asked the captain, I said, "What do we do? We're
11 going to split the frequencies?"

12 And I thought it wasn't that -- it didn't
13 seem proven to me. And, well, these smaller hand-held,
14 these Motorola HT1000s have 17 programmed into them.

15 Our old dinosaur radios, our older Motorolas
16 did not have 17. However, we keep them around because
17 almost all the time we talk on the State frequency.

18 It was my mistake. I was pretty tired. And
19 my experience in fires has been the way I fight a fire,
20 communication is very essential.

21 So, the first thing I did was grab those
22 radios and get down there as soon as I could. That was
23 close but not quite what I should have done.

24 You know, I didn't need those. Those should
25 have gone to the rescue, I mean, the abandon ship

1 folks. And they did eventually as soon as that came to
2 mind these are of no use down here.

3 Because, normally, I'd say, "Here. Here's a
4 radio. Go do this. Let me know when you've got it
5 done." Or, "Give this radio to the critical person
6 that needs it."

7 But I couldn't do that because they were on a
8 different frequency.

9 So, do you understand what I mean by "split"?

10 Q When you said a different frequency, are you
11 talking about the people who were abandoning the ship
12 were on a different frequency?

13 A Absolutely, yeah. Yeah, they're on what we
14 call the State frequency, which is our kind of private
15 channel. Not on most radios. And we switched to 17
16 with all the fire situation.

17 So then the ship was on the State frequency
18 and, once again, our fire was on 17.

19 Q Okay. Since you didn't have the radios that
20 were on the correct frequency, did that present a
21 problem for you? Communication?

22 A More radios would have been good, in my
23 opinion. Once again, I'll tell you there's people that
24 feel differently than me. And there's people that
25 manage things a lot different.

1 There's more than one way to solve a problem.

2 I would prefer to have more radios. I'd prefer to
3 have more air bottles, more SCBAs. At least more air
4 bottles, or a system to charged them.

5 Anyhow, that's what I think.

6 Q Do you have anything else to add as far as
7 changes that you'd make, or things that would have
8 helped you?

9 A Sure. Like I said, I would have split the --
10 and I'm not taking anything away from the way this was
11 done because I think the stewards did an excellent job,
12 and the whole ship performed very well.

13 But, like I said, I would have split the
14 evacuation up. I would have taken all passengers that
15 -- well, there was a couple of them that were kind of
16 hard to deal with.

17 But I would have taken all people that were
18 either hard to deal with or were kind of slowing things
19 down in any way, and I would have taken them aside.

20 And that's a general technique for evacuating
21 through the chutes that we used that you just get them
22 in a different place and don't even worry about them
23 until you need to.

24 You've got all the people that are easy to
25 get off the ship. Of course, with the medical

1 situations -- I can't think of anything off the top of
2 my head other than that.

3 Q I have one more clarification. You said that
4 when the Coast Guard were on board, you reviewed the
5 fire control plan with them?

6 A Uh-huh.

7 Q And then they went downstairs?

8 A Two of them.

9 Q Two of them. Were they in fire fighting
10 gear?

11 A They were fully suited up and they had
12 chemical -- I believe they're called OBAs. They're
13 chemical OBAs. Yes.

14 Q Were there any Coast Guard personnel down
15 there that you know of before you reviewed the fire
16 control plan with them?

17 A I couldn't -- I can't remember exactly
18 whether -- I'm pretty sure the first thing I did was
19 pointed them at the fire control plan.

20 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: Okay,
21 that's all the questions I have. Thank you.

22 Lieutenant?

23 BY LIEUTENANT BARTLETT:

24 Q You said that having the radios that didn't
25 have channel 17 on them didn't really pose a problem.

1 But, you would prefer to have more radios for more
2 communication?

3 A It would be my preference, yeah, the way that
4 I run things. Yes.

5 Q Is there a way to get radios --

6 A Very, very easily, yeah. Very easily. And
7 it was just purely a mistake. Just reaction, my first
8 reaction, is grab radios. I'm going to need them.

9 Q How were they different to you between the
10 ones that don't have 17? Is it just the look?

11 A Two or three times as big.

12 Q Okay. So there's nothing like 17? Or you
13 just know that the dinosaurs don't have 17 on them, and
14 the new ones do?

15 A To be honest with you, I wasn't sure whether
16 there was 17 on them. I was pretty sure they weren't
17 on. So what I did was I grabbed that radio and I just
18 spun it through its four channels and clicked. Then
19 you know whether you're on the right channel or not.

20 Q They weren't.

21 A They weren't. They were just set aside
22 onscene. I just brought them. I knew I'd need them.

23 Q The rescue boat that you said the Chief Mate
24 from the Taku had brought along, who called for that
25 and who positioned it?

1 A Who asked for it?

2 Q Well, it was out and managing it. Was that
3 something that the Taku had launched a rescue boat on
4 their own and they placed it? Or was that managed from
5 let's say the bridge?

6 Do you know of that?

7 A That was really nothing to do with what was
8 happening with me other than I was informed a rescue
9 boat would be bringing bottles, and have them pretty
10 quickly. And SCBAs.

11 Q You had mentioned that when you were there at
12 the ramp there, the two open doors between the vessels,
13 you saw the rescue boat there? It was readily
14 available to anybody who fell in, perhaps.

15 A Right. Like I say once again, I really had
16 nothing to do with that aspect of it. I could make
17 assumptions. But it was done. That was one of the
18 things that happened on the other frequency.

19 Q Did that appear to you to be a good idea or
20 not?

21 A I'm not sure -- yeah, I'd say it appeared to
22 be a good idea to have them standing by in case
23 somebody was in the water. For sure. I don't think it
24 would be possible -- I mean, if you're looking at what
25 could go wrong there by having that rescue boat there,

1 I can't think of anything that would outweigh having
2 them there.

3 I'm really weighing the situation. I would
4 be really surprised if somebody were to fall in the
5 water there. But, just in case.

6 Q You mentioned that you took the ISM checklist
7 down with you. You took them from the 3rd, I believe
8 you said?

9 A I took a copy.

10 Q You took a copy of that down.

11 A Yes. The insurance copy.

12 Q And that you were of course weren't going to
13 stop and sit down and start reading things because as
14 you were trained --

15 A No. That was my intention that I was going
16 to. But, of course, in the situation, the time didn't
17 present itself to do that. I would like to have done
18 that.

19 Q How often do you review the checklist? You
20 said you have one to sixteen?

21 A Roughly, sixteen different drills. How
22 often? Well we, myself, I was looking at the
23 checklists the day before, at the last safety meeting.

24 I mean, as far as reviewing what I do in an
25 emergency situation, that's the last few times that I

1 looked at them. I don't do it all the time, though,
2 no. I think to myself what if somebody fell over the
3 side? What would I do, you know?

4 And -- when I have time to think at my job.

5 Q The SCBAs, you were talked about the
6 documentation, who was keeping notes or who was
7 managing the scene, if there was any documentation
8 taking place.

9 Was there anybody marking times of people on
10 bottles and off bottles and status of fire-fighters in
11 space, out of space, locations, that sort of thing?

12 A I referred to the chief engineer to get an
13 answer to that question. And then I followed through
14 with checking, you know, checking to see if someone was
15 there, because we didn't have that much smoke after a
16 while.

17 And I asked for that to be done. I made it
18 very clear that it's very important that nobody gets in
19 here that is not accounted for that gets out.

20 And I brought a crew list down. I had a crew
21 list brought down with the engineering personnel listed
22 on it. And, like I said, I specified a few times that
23 this is a very critical issue, this is what might
24 happen. You might have to use the fixed CO2 system.

25 And I told the Coast Guard guys, I said, "I

1 don't know if you've ever heard what it sounds like
2 when the fixed CO2 alarm goes off. But, if it goes
3 off, I want you out of there because you might be dead.
4 There's people that have died down there before.

5 And then the chief engineer explained what it
6 sounds like to them. So that was a concern of mine.
7 That's about my answer there.

8 Q Okay. So then there's no active status board
9 that's kept for people on rescue teams?

10 A No. I had the chief engineer manage his
11 people. And then the Coast Guard four personnel. I
12 asked for it to be done. There was no active status
13 board, none that I am aware of, on the scene. You
14 know, like a normal procedure at this time.

15 It could be that I missed out on some part of
16 my training and I should have known.

17 Q Do you have any navigation duties as well as
18 the plethora of other things you have to do?

19 A Well, for years, I've navigated.

20 Q As a chief though. A chief mate.

21 A Now I come up and I relieve. If the skipper
22 will give me the opportunity -- well, basically, most
23 of the navigation in Southeastern Alaska, you can say
24 it's very, very difficult. And it is compared to most
25 ships.

1 But I've been doing it for a long time and
2 most of it is pretty straightforward. There's areas
3 that I'm not as familiar with and that are very
4 challenging.

5 Peril Straights are just narrows going into
6 Sitka. Wrangle Narrows, I'm up every single time. And
7 I've often stayed there I haven't missed one yet. I'm
8 up every single time, no matter what, and I'm watching
9 to see, watching, helping, you know, helping the watch.
10 And also watching and seeing what the skipper does.

11 As far as navigating goes, as chief mate, my
12 duties on this ship are minimal. Last summer, on the
13 Aurora I stood 12 hours of watch and did chief mate's
14 duties.

15 So I get a good portion.

16 Q One last question. You had mentioned and it
17 kind of caught my attention, you said it was an
18 unsolvable puzzle.

19 A Yeah. Go ahead. Ask the rest of the
20 question.

21 Q "Mustering. Probably one of the most
22 important evolutions that take place on a passenger
23 vessel. I would hope we could solve it."

24 And I guess perhaps...

25 (Begin Tape 2-B:)

1 MR. BIAGI: I've got questions on how to do
2 this properly, I'm sure we have the established
3 paperwork. You know, somebody generates some paperwork
4 and says, okay, you guys are going to do it this way.

5 Please tell me what you think is the best way
6 to do it because I'm open. I think that was a very
7 difficult problem in an emergency, especially when you
8 get into a dire emergency where pressure is on and
9 maybe you have to be off the ship in ten minutes.

10 Q Sure. I guess I'm not sitting here, like I
11 said, in a judgmental or --

12 A I don't mean it that way. I'm open to any
13 input you have.

14 Q Right. Cruise ships, we get on cruise ships
15 all the time. You know, they're in our zone all the
16 time. And they just have some very efficient ways for
17 accounting for people.

18 One luxury they do have that you don't have
19 on these vessels is people, is a staff. You know, one
20 staff member for two passengers. So that
21 accountability is kind of neat.

22 They have lists and they have people
23 responsible for mustering stations. So I'm certainly
24 able to, you know, at a different time offer that up.
25 But, certainly, I would hope though that it wouldn't be

1 unsolvable, that we could, you know, as we partner --
2 and we partner every four weeks, that we could work on
3 this issue.

4 A I'll be happy to. I'm just one person here
5 but I'll be happy to take any advice you have in that
6 because I know that our muster was not a hundred
7 percent certain.

8 Q There's one issue as far as where the Coast
9 Guard comes into play, is for search and rescue, for
10 instance. We had two conflicting passenger counts.

11 And, luckily, we had beautiful weather.

12 A That's exactly what we have, two conflicting
13 passenger lists.

14 Q So, potentially, we could have helicopter
15 crews and boat teams out searching or whatever when we
16 didn't need to. And that's just one issue on our side
17 of the house.

18 And like I said, there's absolutely no
19 judgment at all because I wasn't here on the boat. An
20 observation.

21 A Right.

22 MS. TERRY WEAVER: That was Mr. Bartlett from
23 the Coast Guard who was doing the questioning.

24 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

25 Q Would you elaborate on the confusion on the

1 passenger count? Is that something that happened on
2 this one?

3 A Yes, ma'am.

4 Q Would you explain? I'm just not aware of
5 that.

6 A No, I'm not completely familiar.

7 CAPTAIN BRERETON: You probably want to go
8 over that with me during my testimony.

9 THE INTERVIEWER: Okay, I'll go over that
10 with you.

11 MS. TERRY WEAVER: One other thing.

12 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

13 Q The muster leaders, on passengers of muster,
14 is there any type of identification that crew members
15 are required to wear to show that they're muster
16 leaders, or anything like that?

17 A As of this season, and I believe that they
18 were sent to us this spring, say, the ship was laid up.
19 One of the many things that we had to do was get these
20 hard hats and set them aside for this type of
21 situation.

22 It's not, as I mentioned before, the captain
23 said "This is a fifteen day old pause using the State
24 frequency." Well, new to this entire fleet is a set of
25 hard hats that a crew will wear, yellow, I believe,

1 that sets them aside as crew members during an
2 emergency.

3 No people on the crew were familiar with that
4 yet. They had just been put in, I believe, in the TPA
5 lockers. I've gone through and I've explained to all
6 the crew on the ships that I've drilled -- TPAs
7 [Thermal Protective Aid] have been around slightly
8 longer on here -- what you do with a TPA.

9 But, in my first week on here, the hard hats
10 were not brought into the drill, nor were they used in
11 the emergency drill.

12 Q But they are available.

13 A Just recently, yes.

14 Q What is a TPA?

15 A It's a thermal protective aid. It's
16 basically a base blanket that you can get in and zip
17 yourself up in and hopefully stay a little warmer on
18 the beach.

19 Q The last question is I note there were some
20 people from foreign countries, a lot of people from
21 foreign countries on the vessel.

22 Is that true? Out of the country?

23 A It always is true here to have people. I
24 speak a little bit of Spanish and that always helps.
25 And we have some people that speak some German. I'd

1 say Germans are common here.

2 I didn't have a lot of difficulty
3 communicating -- I had no difficulties communicating
4 with anyone, although I do believe that we had two
5 different -- I don't know what the term is -- mute
6 people traveling.

7 Q Oh, really?

8 A Yes. And I conversed with one by pen and
9 paper on the ramp earlier that week. I don't know if
10 she was on board. But then I believe there might have
11 been someone else because she didn't have much to say.

12 And she was giving me the same type of ways
13 of communication that the other lady had.

14 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: That's all
15 I have. Thank you.

16 CAPTAIN BRERETON: George Brereton, Captain
17 of the Columbia.

18 And to be fair to you, Chris, you know I
19 supervise you regularly and see what goes on and find
20 the faults. But the intent of this here is to find out
21 all the things that went wrong.

22 So I'm not trying to put you on the spot.

23 MR. BIAGI: No, I can...

24 BY CAPTAIN BRERETON:

25 Q Did they ask you about your sleep hours when

1 I was gone to the toilet?

2 A Well, I guess if we could -- I didn't really
3 -- no, they didn't.

4 Q Not specifically. Well, for the record here,
5 I'm going to ask you how much sleep you got the night
6 before the incident.

7 A Okay. Well, I got to Auke Bay. Oh, I don't
8 know, 8 in the morning, 9 in the morning, Monday
9 morning, something like that. Of course, you've got to
10 get up a little bit early so I was up around -- we'll
11 just say I was up at 7 a.m. Monday morning, roughly.
12 Slept in an hour which I do when I can.

13 I think we left at around 2 p.m., so I was up
14 that entire time. And I was up all the way to Haines,
15 dealing with all kinds of new regulations that we've
16 got to institute in all my other duties. Just trying
17 to keep up with my job.

18 There's a lot of stuff that's going on and
19 we're swamped all the time, but this season even more
20 so.

21 And then in Haines, up straight through
22 there, straight through Skagway, slept for about twenty
23 minutes between Skagway and Haines.

24 By that time, it might have been 2:30 before
25 we left?

1 Q Haines?

2 A So we started on Monday morning. It would be
3 2:30 Tuesday morning. So I had slept twenty minutes,
4 twenty-five. I'm not sure.

5 Got back up. Went and did the cargo
6 operations in Haines, which is a pretty critical part.
7 We have to load our whole upper car deck so that we
8 can carry -- have you got a schedule?

9 Q The log, so you can read the time we left
10 Haines.

11 A Okay. I don't remember exactly when but it
12 was late because we had to load the whole upper car
13 deck, because we had a large load coming on in Juneau
14 where we had ... I think. Okay, Battery Point. We
15 left at 2:30. So, 2:30 from Haines.

16 Finally got to bed, probably slept three or
17 four hours. It's a four-hour running time to Juneau,
18 four hours and fifteen minutes, four hours and twenty
19 minutes.

20 Got up and did Juneau, stayed up straight.
21 And at noon -- I never mentioned it before but I'm sure
22 someone has mentioned it -- I don't know if it's been
23 on tape yet. But, Carmen -- I'll have to go and tell
24 everybody this because it's kind of almost funny how
25 this happened.

1 The captain and I were in the room talking.
2 And like I said, I was helping him on the computer and
3 just barely able to keep my eyes open and not able to
4 complete a sentence, just very tired. I was really
5 tired.

6 And, last night was actually the first time I
7 really -- I had six and a half -- catching up on sleep.

8 He says, "You know, Chris, you should really get some
9 sleep." And I looked at him and then I looked up and
10 the lights started to blink. Started to dim.

11 And I said, "No, we should go up to the
12 bridge." And we ran up to the bridge and everything
13 started.

14 After that, I just approximate 60 hours for
15 the whole time. I put 60 hours in, in about four days.

16 But that's an emergency that happens, you know.
17 Emergencies you stay up a long time.

18 Q So would it be fair to summarize that before
19 the emergency, you had a 25-minute nap between Skagway
20 and Haines? And a four hour sleep or four hour and
21 fifteen minute sleep between Haines and Auke Bay?

22 A Four hours and fifteen minutes between Haines
23 and Auke Bay is impossible to do --

24 (Simultaneous voices.)

25 Q Well, you overslept when we were -- remember?

1 A Overslept, yeah.

2 Q All right, thank you.

3 A So that was my sleep.

4 Q Thank you.

5 You mentioned that you hadn't been accustomed
6 to two radio frequencies, you didn't know if you liked
7 that yet.

8 But I didn't hear. What do you think about
9 two radio frequencies now?

10 A Fantastic. Made me a believer.

11 Q Thank you.

12 Do you remember requesting for me to request
13 to Taku to loan us some air bottles?

14 A I don't know that I was part of that.

15 Q This muster list that's in front of you, this
16 is a new muster list from when you had your two weeks
17 last fall, your first two weeks as chief mate?

18 When you came back this time, this was
19 something you hadn't seen before; is that correct?

20 A This was drawn up after I left. I worked a
21 month in the yard. And like I say, there's a lot of
22 stuff to get done in the yard. The muster list was
23 done immediately after I left. And then the two weeks
24 that I came back was when the muster list was given to
25 me.

1 Q Okay, actually, I'll correct you. The muster
2 list was done when Doug and I were here right before
3 you came back to work. It was done in your absence but
4 it wasn't done right after you left.

5 A Okay. It was supposed to be done.

6 Q It was supposed to be done right after you
7 left. It was done right before you came back.

8 A Okay.

9 Q So did you have an opportunity to study all
10 of this before you were putting it into effect as
11 drills very much?

12 A Oh, I don't think that you can just look at
13 this and completely understand, you know. But, I
14 reviewed it. I wouldn't say that I could just look at
15 this and say, okay, I see how it's going to work.

16 No, I needed to take time and work with the
17 people that worked on it and see what they were
18 thinking and what changes they had. And that was on my
19 list of things to do, I think, in my busy schedule.

20 I think it was asked that just not -- I just
21 didn't have time. I don't even remember whether I
22 asked or not. I think I did but I don't remember.

23 Q And one final question, Chris. And you're
24 doing fine, thank you.

25 If you had had a few weeks to drill with this

1 muster list, do you think things would have gone
2 smoother?

3 A I think things went pretty smooth already.
4 That's what I think. But, absolutely, absolutely.

5 Q Perhaps you wouldn't have grabbed those three
6 radios if you had had a couple of weeks to get used to
7 this idea, and you would have gone down there with a
8 different three radios?

9 A Right. Or, maybe I was a little -- the ship
10 had been running longer, in general. You know, I was
11 more familiar with where things are on the ship, more
12 accustomed to the routine.

13 Like I mentioned to the captain, I said, "I
14 wish I had been on here for two years just so when I'm
15 improvising solutions to problems, I wouldn't have to
16 go, okay, what can I use for a ramp and start looking
17 around.

18 I could -- I would know right here, this is
19 where this -- and I knew where a lot of stuff is on the
20 ship from working-- years ago I worked on here maybe a
21 large percentage of my work.

22 Q That's what? Five years ago?

23 A It was five years ago. I was 3rd mate,
24 basically. All 3rd mate. And that was all, you know,
25 minus a couple of weeks here and there. It was at

1 least five years before I came on here.

2 Q Since when you went there, I'll come up with
3 another question. Did you ever respond to any
4 emergency incidents between when you were 3rd mate
5 here?

6 A Uh-huh. And I have responded to emergency
7 situations. And I was in a situation where I had to do
8 CPR on an older person who had just had triple bypass
9 surgery, pulled him out of the water and trying to
10 revive him.

11 I can't think -- my CPR instructor because
12 the guy was just chocked full of water. You know, you
13 go through and they explain CPR to you and you get
14 certified. And they say, "Oh, just tilt his head over
15 and get some of the stuff out of there and just give
16 him CPR."

17 This guy apparently, from medical friends,
18 suffered from pulmonary edema. And he had basically --
19 his lungs were full of water. And nothing. I imagine
20 several of you probably have done CPR before, but it's
21 frustrating when the lungs are full of water.

22 I thought we did pretty well in that
23 situation. We, once again, we improvised. We had to
24 get a body out of the water. That was before the
25 rescue boats with these nice -- well, I don't know what

1 they're called. Jacobs... What are those called?

2 CAPTAIN BRERETON: Jacobs.

3 MR. BIAGI: Those are called Jacob's Ladders,
4 too?

5 MR. BIAGI: Short ones. Well, to pull the
6 bodies out. Well, this guy we just grabbed and, on
7 quick notice, we grabbed a line and we wrapped it under
8 his shoulders, under his armpits and twisted it.

9 BY CAPTAIN BRERETON:

10 Q How big was that person?

11 A Oh, he had to weigh 200 pounds at least. I
12 would say. And just two of us, George and I, we're not
13 exactly muscle men. We had him out of the water in
14 about five seconds. Dumped him, pulled him up, threw
15 him up, started doing the CPR.

16 I was absolutely amazed that I remembered
17 CPR, right? I've always had a little -- you know, I
18 wondered how I'd do in an emergency situation. And I
19 was worried, you know, that I would remember that.
20 Time just slows down and most of it came back to me,
21 thank God. He died though.

22 CAPTAIN BRERETON: So the reason I brought
23 that up is because you were asked if you had ever been
24 in command before. But I wanted to let you know I've
25 seen Chris perform under stress before. He does very

1 well.

2 He didn't hesitate when I said to do CPR on
3 that guy, a third mate, brand-new here. And I think he
4 did very well. He doesn't have a lot of experience
5 here to go with him. And he did quite well on the
6 limited experience and resources he had on this ship
7 and a very new muster plan, fire-fighting plan.

8 MR. BIAGI: Thank you.

9 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: Thanks for
10 your clarifications, Captain.

11 I keep saying I only have one more question -
12 - I only have two more questions.

13 MR. BIAGI: Okay.

14 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

15 Q One, I just wanted to clarify whether or not
16 you account for people at their muster station because
17 I think we talked about it, and you talked about
18 accounting for passengers.

19 But, I don't think I specifically asked the
20 question. Do you have a procedure for accounting for
21 passengers at their muster station?

22 A We have the procedure, yes. We do have a
23 procedure. The stewards, I believe. The purser will--
24 I don't know exactly what the procedure is for
25 accounting for them on here.

1 But we have designated stewards, various
2 stewards, to solve that problem. Our tickets we have
3 for everybody on board, we have our counts of people.
4 We have crew lists for our passengers. And we have
5 designated stewards to do those, do those duties.

6 But, once again, you can designate in
7 paperwork anything you want. To make it happen in real
8 life is tough.

9 Q How are passengers told where their muster
10 stations are? Are they directly told?

11 A Well, they have an announcement every time we
12 report that tells them that. And then they're told
13 again during the emergency. I don't think there was
14 too much trouble with that.

15 I was not up there while this was happening
16 but the few times that I had to run up to grab
17 something or do something, I saw we had been going just
18 as planned without, like I say, on separate channel to
19 me, just flowing pretty well.

20 Q How many muster stations do you have?

21 A Well, we've got, like I say, we've got -- it
22 varies. I think it's four. We have the aft deck, we
23 have the port and starboard boat decks, and we have one
24 forward also. They're listed right there.

25 Q You said the passengers are given the

1 announcements as soon as they get on board.

2 A Right.

3 Q But, how are the different muster stations
4 identified?

5 A We have some new things on board all the
6 vessels, I believe. You might notice the You Are Here
7 maps. I'm not positive. These are brand-new. This is
8 the year they showed up on this vessel like that, this
9 spring.

10 Once again, You Are Here, although I'm not
11 sure those are posted on there. I haven't had the time
12 to even look at them. They're up and they explain how
13 you get out. I think that they'll show you how to get
14 out of the ship to the muster station.

15 CAPTAIN BRERETON: I just want to remind you
16 it's okay to say you don't know.

17 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: Yes, it's
18 okay if you don't.

19 MR. BIAGI: But those are the methods that I
20 would expect.

21 BY THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER:

22 Q You mentioned, when you were talking about
23 the planking used to transfer people from the Taku,
24 from the Columbia to the Taku.

25 Do you have any type of plan that you follow

1 if you have to transfer passengers from one vessel to
2 another? Is that information any type of evacuation
3 plan?

4 A I don't think the one we used is.

5 Q Well, was that ad hoc?

6 A That was all solve the problem as it comes to
7 you. We definitely have plans. That's what actually
8 is one of the largest issues. As I'm sure you all are
9 aware of, you have a cruise ship here with so many
10 people on it. You need to get them off in a certain
11 amount of time.

12 I'm not really a big fan of our new means of
13 rescue platform. I think it's a legislative thing.
14 And, once again, time will tell, and experience will
15 tell. Maybe, I'll change my mind.

16 But, initially, it seems like kind of a bad
17 idea to me. The only purpose of that part, as I
18 understand, is for mass transportation of people from
19 water's edge to the upper decks of the ship.

20 And particularly for a situation like that
21 where you want to move a lot of people quickly off of a
22 cruise ship. That's the main reason.

23 I know that somebody somewhere has decided
24 that this is worldwide-approved, but I'd like to see
25 that thing in 40 knots of wind. You know, it would

1 make a good kite.

2 I think they need to go back to the drawing
3 board on that. But, that's just my opinion on that.

4 Q What options -- if you don't know this, fine
5 -- but what options would you have had if the Taku
6 wasn't there to save the passengers?

7 A We have several options. We have, oh, I
8 think it's 900 in raft capacity on here. And we have
9 48 per lifeboat.

10 Q So you'd use the regular life-saving
11 equipment?

12 A Yes. We have what those Marine evacuation
13 shoots, which on my list, once again, are not quite
14 proven. Alaska really has special conditions here
15 sometimes. And survival, chances are minimal for
16 survival in wintertime unless you're in a survival
17 suit, you know, basically.

18 But, we have the platforms that will drop the
19 chute. And it will extend down to the water's edge of
20 the platform. We have all of our rafts, which can be
21 marshalled along side.

22 And people, they show you a nice video. They
23 can put 400 people through it in ten minutes, the
24 people that will sell it to you.

25 That's one option we have. Another option,

1 which is a realistic option -- I don't know whether I
2 should mention it in front of Safety Board.

3 But, I think in a real fire situation, we're
4 in a lot of trouble. This fire was contained. We're
5 in a lot of trouble. And nobody on here doubts that
6 there is, just even in your day to day job, you're in a
7 situation where one mistake that you make -- the
8 captain makes a mistake or maybe the winds don't --
9 you're not prepared for the winds on the ship. Or,
10 there's a mechanical problem. Something causes the
11 ship to lose control in any way, human life is very,
12 very fragile.

13 And it's always something that's on my mind
14 here. But I would take the vessel up on the beach and
15 get them off. It's not that far.

16 That's, I think that several other people
17 would agree. If there was a serious, serious
18 situation, just to get people off, I'd be looking for a
19 good beach fast.

20 And, you know, it's a lot better to be
21 sitting on the beach than it is to be sitting on ship.

22 MR. NORM EDWARDS: And that's the captain's
23 decision?

24 MR. BIAGI: Right. And the chief mate is
25 under the captain.

1 MR. NORM EDWARDS: And I think we're getting
2 to areas here that don't, you know, it's not his job.

3 MS. TERRY WEAVER: No, it's not his job but
4 he's responsible for passengers and he's responsible
5 for their evacuation.

6 CAPTAIN BRERETON: No, he's not.

7 MR. BIAGI: I'm not responsible. The captain
8 is.

9 CAPTAIN BRERETON: The chief purser is
10 responsible for the passengers. And the chief steward.

11 MR. NORM EDWARDS: Norm Edwards, the
12 Operations Manager from the Columbia.

13 In regards to accounting for passengers, you
14 had asked the question about the muster stations, and
15 the chief purser is the one that's responsible for
16 taking the count. We've made sweeps of the vessel to
17 ensure there weren't people left behind.

18 The number of persons on the vessels is
19 accounted for when that ship leaves port, each port
20 that it leaves, we check -- the chief purser again goes
21 back to that person who collects all the tickets at the
22 ramp. And that report is given to the captain each
23 time the ship sails.

24 So there's the accounting of the number of
25 passengers. And those passengers as far as who those

1 passengers are go back to the manifest, which is
2 developed at the terminal.

3 THE INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you want to
4 explain for us -- I understand that there's some people
5 that sleep overnight? Some sleep. And they have
6 reservations?

7 MR. EDWARDS: Correct.

8 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: Could you
9 just explain now that works, you know, for the
10 different trips? For people that are on for short
11 periods of time, and then there's others that stay
12 overnight, depending on the length of their trip.

13 Is that how it works?

14 MR. EDWARDS: That's right. And they have a
15 cabin for a certain period of time. And then they
16 vacate that cabin and that cabin is changed.

17 And that's on the period -- they know they've
18 rented it for a certain amount of time.

19 CAPTAIN BRERETON: There are lots of people
20 that don't have cabins that stay aboard and sleep
21 aboard as well. They sleep --

22 THE INTERVIEWER: Say that again?

23 CAPTAIN BRERETON: There are lots of people
24 that travel on the ship that do not have cabins. They
25 travel on deck passage. They sleep in tents. They

1 sleep in chairs. They sleep on lounge chairs. They
2 sleep on sleeping bags on the deck up in the solarium.

3 This population on the ship changes daily.
4 Some get on -- some people have advance reservations
5 months in advance like they do on the cruise ships.
6 Some people walk into that terminal and buy a ticket.
7 Show up. They might be going one port or ten.

8 We don't have the luxury of having advanced
9 reservations with block people that are traveling for
10 large blocks of time.

11 When I say large blocks of time, three days
12 can be a large block of time for us.

13 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: Right.

14 CAPTAIN BRERETON: And for the cruise ships,
15 most of those people come for a week or five days or
16 something, and they get a reservation two months in
17 advance. And they can generate a list weeks in advance
18 of who's going to be there, because the space all sold.

19 We don't run that type of an operation.

20 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: That's
21 what I was wondering in asking for the passenger list,
22 whether you had addresses, or was it like a train.
23 Sometimes, people come and, you know, get on and off
24 and may not have that detailed information.

25 CAPTAIN BRERETON: This is like a commuter

1 train.

2 MS. TERRY WEAVER: Okay, that's what I was...

3 CAPTAIN BRERETON: I operate on the theory
4 here that I'm not looking for every name of every
5 passenger. The purser has a ticket to try and account
6 for the various parties. And the tickets are sold in
7 groups, group tickets.

8 I look at numbers of bodies and I realize
9 that we get stowaways. That I have one more body to
10 get off the ship than I had on my list told me I
11 probably had a stowaway and I probably had everybody
12 off.

13 There were three to five sweeps of this ship
14 made looking for people, including one after I thought
15 everybody was off on board.

16 And that is the technique I use to try and
17 account for everybody. Now I realize the Coast Guard
18 has a legitimate concern that we may be looking for
19 someone we think is missing.

20 The only way we would be looking for someone
21 that we think is missing is if we have a report that
22 someone is missing.

23 MR. EDWARDS: But, standard practice is to
24 sweep the ship because you don't know, because somebody
25 may be traveling alone and they wouldn't be missed.

1 MS. TERRY WEAVER: Right.

2 MR. BIAGI: We did sweep it over and over.

3 And I requested after the... quarters had been swept, I
4 went down and swept them myself with a flashlight.

5 And I looked for little kids that might be
6 hiding somewhere. You know, this remote possibilities.

7 So I think we probably swept three times in
8 that situation. And on the upper decks, it's just the
9 same thing. We made absolutely sure everyone is off
10 the ship. If you listened to the radios, that's what
11 was happening.

12 CAPTAIN BRERETON: You had something to add
13 there?

14 MR. STERN: Yes. I haven't heard --

15 MR. EDWARDS: State your name.

16 MS. TERRY WEAVER: You don't have to if you
17 don't want. Did you want to clarify something?

18 MR. STERN: Well, I haven't heard anybody
19 express this yet about one of our procedures for
20 sweeping the ship.

21 THE INTERVIEWER MS. TERRY WEAVER: Okay.

22 MR. STERN: Doug Stern, alternate chief mate,
23 Columbia.

24 Pertaining to sweeping the ship and
25 accounting for passengers. And the reason I'm bringing

1 this up is because I haven't heard in any of the
2 interviews anybody speak of this -- the chief steward
3 or the purser or anybody.

4 There are some lockers up forward on the port
5 side behind the pressure counter that have flashlights
6 and master keys to all the stateroom decks.

7 And I'm not sure who is assigned to get those
8 keys. If it's on this list as to which crew members
9 are assigned, but certain stewards are assigned when
10 there's a passenger evacuation or a drill to go to
11 those lockers, open them, well, I don't know who opens
12 it up but somebody opens it up and inside that locker
13 is a key, a master key and a flashlight attached to it.

14 And those crew members each have a certain
15 block of staterooms to sweep. They go, they disburse
16 along their way. They check their spaces they're
17 supposed to check.

18 They go in the room, they grab a towel. If
19 nobody's in there, they put a towel on the door handle
20 or on the deck next to the door.

21 And that's how they sweep the ship. And they
22 start from the bottom and they work their way up.

23 There's certain stewards, and the OSP is
24 assigned to sweep the forward crew quarters where the
25 deck hands and the unlicensed engineers work.

1 And then we have the storekeeper assigned to
2 sweep the after steward's quarters because he's usually
3 down in the storeroom.

4 He sweeps that. So that's where our under
5 the deck crew quarters are swept. Those people work
6 their way up. And they report either with the radio or
7 through the phone to the purser or to the bridge that
8 the crew quarters have been swept aft. Forward crew
9 quarters have been swept and clear of people.

10 The people, the stewards who have got these
11 flashlights and keys that are sweeping the passenger
12 cabins are working their way from aft forward and
13 they're making their way forward to the purser.

14 And when they get those areas swept -- and
15 they have a master key so they can get into any room,
16 you know, to make sure nobody's in there, they report
17 to the steward that it's been swept and clear of
18 passengers.

19 And they were moving, all the time moving
20 people up...

21 (Begin Tape 3, Side A:)

22 MR. STERN: ...have it designed is they make
23 their way up to the purser. And they tell the purser
24 that their area has been swept.

25 And I'm not exactly sure how the purser

1 checks these off, but we talked to Melissa. And once
2 these people are out and they move them out and they
3 move them up to the boat deck, that's what we work on,
4 moving them out and up the stairs and out to the boat
5 deck, because that's where the embarkation is and the
6 muster stations.

7 And to clarify something, we have the three
8 muster stations -- the dining room, the snack bar and
9 the forward lounge area are our muster stations.

10 MS. TERRY WEAVER: Okay.

11 MR. STERN: And so -- and you heard Melissa
12 say that the captain released her to come up to the
13 boat deck.

14 MS. TERRY WEAVER: Right.

15 MR. STERN: So, once all these areas are
16 swept and the passengers are not necessarily accounted
17 for on any list, but swept and moved up, then at that
18 point, when all the passengers are up and the crew
19 members are up, then the captain releases the purser to
20 come up and help manage the crowd.

21 But, the purser will stay at the purser
22 counter until that time that the captain releases
23 them... and the way the radios are working, should be
24 working, on the evacuation is you have the chief purser
25 and the chief steward going up through to the captain,

1 talking to the captain.

2 And then they will be -- and then the chief
3 steward and the chief purser will be talking to the
4 other crew members and managing this crowd.

5 So I wanted to clarify that. I hadn't heard
6 anybody talk about the keys and flashlights in that
7 locker.

8 So I wanted to clarify that.

9 MS. TERRY WEAVER: Is there anything else
10 that you heard that you want to clarify?

11 CAPTAIN BRERETON: We'll recap. One person
12 is in charge of each deck's evacuation, a staff officer
13 -- chief steward, 2nd steward, chief purser.

14 All of them have radios. They move up. One
15 of them is in charge of each muster area. All of them
16 have radios. And they have other crews assigned.

17 So, when you ask how can we put the word out
18 if we don't have a PA, that person has a radio. And
19 there are people are spread out here around with the
20 passengers to keep them calm and they're disbursed
21 amongst them.

22 And they communicate with the crew, and the
23 crew communicates with the passengers. So that's how
24 we can get the word out with a limited number of radios
25 if we don't have a PA. And that's what happened.

1 MR. BIAGI: I overheard several comments
2 after from the steward as he performed the sweeps.

3 And what I heard was that he thought it was
4 probably a good idea, the idea with the flashlights and
5 the keys.

6 And they just said, "Boy, that worked really
7 good." You know, they were pretty impressed with how
8 well that worked.

9 So there's one point.

10 CAPTAIN BRERETON: In the chief purser's
11 testimony, when she came to clear up her deck, one of
12 the stewards that was new here and didn't understand
13 how we do it here on the Columbia had closed the doors
14 to the stateroom and locked them.

15 So she went back and reswept those staterooms
16 to make sure nobody was in there. You know, she made
17 sure her deck was clear before she moved up, even
18 though somebody had gone through there and swept it but
19 they hadn't followed the procedure of leaving the door
20 open, with the towel in there to keep the door open.

21 MR. BIAGI: Right.

22 CAPTAIN BRERETON: With the standout.

23 MS. TERRY WEAVER: Yes, that's a good
24 procedure. And it's commonly used.

25 MR. ANTHONY MURRAY: This ends the interview

- 1 with the Chief Mate on board the Motor Vessel Columbia.
- 2 And the Chief Mate is Christian S. Biagi.
- 3 (Interview concluded.)